In the early 1900s, conservationists warned of the impending extinction of the Ivory-billed woodpecker. The bird, whose historical range stretched from South Carolina to Florida and west into Texas, was rarely seen by ornithologists. In Louisiana, there were rumors of a sizeable population along the Tensas River. These rumors proved true when a Louisiana state legislator shot one in 1932. Word spread that the Ivory-billed woodpecker was holding on at an 80,000 acre tract along the Tensas River owned by the Singer Sewing Machine Company. This discovery gave ornithologists hope that if the Singer Tract could be protected, the species might survive.

James Tanner
From 1937 to 1939, James Tanner, a young doctoral student at Cornell University, researched the Ivory-billed woodpeckers of the Singer Tract. Based on his findings, Tanner wrote the definitive book on Ivory-billed woodpeckers.

During his years at the Singer Tract, Tanner saw the population decline to only six birds remaining. He attributed this decline primarily to loss of food and loss of habitat. During a 1941 visit to the Singer Tract, he noted that the property was being heavily logged, and that it would be the end of the Ivory-billed woodpecker there.

The Fight to Save the Singer Woodpeckers
Tanner wasn’t the only one hoping to save the population of Ivory-billed woodpeckers at Singer. John Baker, president of the Audubon Society, appealed to President Franklin Roosevelt, who directed the Secretary of Interior to consider how to save the land. Baker secured a $200,000 pledge from Louisiana Governor Sam Jones to purchase the property. Jones, along with the governors of Tennessee, Mississippi, and Arkansas, wrote to Chicago Mill asking them to spare the bird. In 1943 Baker, the refuge director for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Louisiana’s conservation commissioner met with the chairman of the board of Chicago Mill, but the company refused to deal. Baker failed in his attempts to get the Louisiana governor and the U.S. Congress to act to condemn the land.

The Last Ivory-Billed Woodpecker
Running out of options, Baker sent Audubon staff (and later president of The Nature Conservancy) Richard Pough to the Singer Tract in December, 1943 to search for another bird and hopefully nearby land that might be suitable habitat for the birds. In January, 1944, Pough saw the last Ivory-bill at a place on the Singer tract called John’s Bayou. Pough warned that this place could be logged any day. Upon hearing that news, wildlife artist Don Eckelberry raced down to John’s Bayou, where he spent two weeks following and painting the bird. Eckelberry also saw the logging that cut down the trees used by the last Ivory-billed woodpecker.

Prior to the 2004 discovery of the Ivory-billed woodpecker at Cache River National Wildlife Refuge in Arkansas, this was the last authenticated sighting of the bird in the U.S.
The ivory-billed woodpecker is the type species for the genus Campephilus, a group of large American woodpeckers. Although they look very similar to the pileated woodpeckers, they are not close relatives as the pileated is a member of the genus Dryocopus. Ornithologists have traditionally recognized two subspecies of this bird: the American ivory-billed, the more famous of the two, and the Cuban ivory-billed woodpecker. The two look similar despite differences in size and plumage. A male ivory-billed woodpecker leaving the nest as the female returns: This and the following photos were taken in the Singer Tract, Louisiana, April 1935, by Arthur A. Allen. The ivory-billed woodpecker is thought to pair for life. Pairs are also known to travel together. Ivory-billed Woodpeckers used extensive stands of large trees and often foraged in areas where many trees had been recently killed by flooding, fire, and other disturbances. They originally occurred in upland pine forests, but by 1891 they nested mainly in baldcypress swamps and foraged in the drier margins where the swamps met upland pine forests. The Ivory-billed Woodpecker is probably extinct. Partners in Flight rates the species as a 20 out of 20 on the Continental Concern Score and places it on the Red Watch List. Ivory-billed Woodpecker is also listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List, and federally endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Confirmed Ivory-bill footage taken by Arthur Allen and colleagues in Louisiana's Singer Tract in 1935 (left) examined next to video taken by Collins near Pearl River (right). Video: Courtesy of Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Michael Collins. Jerome Jackson, an ornithologist at Florida Gulf Coast University and author of a book and numerous articles on the Ivory-billed woodpecker, doesn't agree with Collins' assertion that even the possibility of the species is enough to promote conservation. Given that the species' habitat is remote and scarce, and that surviving woodpeckers are likely fearful of humans, snapping the Ivory-bill is going to take a very long time, Collins says. That doesn't mean the debate should be over; it just might need to move away from an image-only definition of evidence. The Ivory-Billed Woodpecker is a species of bird that went extinct in 1990 North America. This woodpecker is the largest species in the world, at roughly 51 centimetres (20 in; 1.67 ft) long and 76 centimetres (30 in; 2.49 ft) in wingspan. It is native to the bottomland hardwood forests and temperate coniferous forests of the Southeastern United States and Cuba. Habitat destruction, and to a lesser extent, hunting has reduced populations so thoroughly that the species is listed as critically The ivory-bill was common throughout the bottomland forests of the southern United States, and the biggest woodpecker in North America. It had dramatic black and white feathers and an ivory-colored beak. Male ivory-bills had a bright red plume. As the Southern forests disappeared, so did the ivory-bill. The last confirmed sighting took place in 1944 in Northwest Louisiana, on a piece of land logged by the Singer Sewing Machine Company. Within a few years, many assumed the ivory-bill was extinct. Except people kept seeing it.
Confirmed Ivory-bill footage taken by Arthur Allen and colleagues in Louisiana’s Singer Tract in 1935 (left) examined next to video taken by Collins near Pearl River (right). Video: Courtesy of Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Michael Collins. Jerome Jackson, an ornithologist at Florida Gulf Coast University and author of a book and numerous articles on the Ivory-billed woodpecker, doesn’t agree with Collins’ assertion that even the possibility of the species is enough to promote conservation. Given that the species”™ habitat is remote and scarce, and that surviving woodpeckers are likely fearful of humans, snapping the Ivory-bill is going to take a very long time, Collins says. That doesn”™t mean the debate should be over; it just might need to move away from an image-only definition of evidence. The ivory-billed woodpecker (Campephilus principalis) is a woodpecker native to the bottomland hardwood forests and temperate coniferous forests of the Southeastern United States and Cuba. Habitat destruction and hunting have reduced populations so thoroughly that the species is listed as Critically Endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and as “definitely or probably extinct” by the American Birding Association. The last universally accepted sighting of an American ivory The ivory-billed woodpecker is the type species for the genus Campephilus, a group of large American woodpeckers. Although they look very similar to the pileated woodpeckers, they are not close relatives as the pileated is a member of the genus Dryocopus. Ornithologists have traditionally recognized two subspecies of this bird: the American ivory-billed, the more famous of the two, and the Cuban ivory-billed woodpecker. The two look similar despite differences in size and plumage. A male ivory-billed woodpecker leaving the nest as the female returns: This and the following photos were taken in the Singer Tract, Louisiana, April 1935, by Arthur A. Allen. The ivory-billed woodpecker is thought to pair for life. Pairs are also known to travel together. The Ivory billed woodpecker is thought to be extinct. Yet controversial sightings of the ivory bill give hope to those who believe the Ghost bird lives on in the southeastern US. James Tanner’s classic study between 1937 and 1939 in the Singer Tract in Louisiana produced the most thorough modern example if the Ivory Billed woodpecker. He observed Ivory Bills and described their strong, direct flight with rapid wing beats similar to that of a pintail duck. The flight ended, he noted, with a quick upward swoop similar to that of other birds. Long distance flight took place above the forest canopy. He noticed their flight was noisy, producing a clattering sound. Between 1979 and 1987, large tracts of Ivory Bill habitat was lost to a sudden increased demand for soybean pro